



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Department of Social Services

PRESS RELEASE/PSA

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Local Youth Receives Brighter Future Thanks to Local Doctor

Children who enter the custody of the Department of Social Services have not experienced the happiest of childhoods. One such child in Catawba County had an additional obstacle in his young life. On top of all that he had suffered in his young life, he was born with ears that were disproportionately large for his head that did not have the fold that usually holds the ears back against the head. As you can imagine, he was the victim of much teasing at the hands of other children, which was interfering with his adjustment and recovery.

His Social Worker, Bernie Boags, and therapist, Glen Arizmendi, recognized that if something could be done for his ears, it might boost his self esteem and prevent him from getting into fights at school. However, while the Department of Social Services receives funding to care for children within their custody, it is only enough to cover the basic needs of children. Plastic surgery to reconstruct a child's ears is not considered a basic need.

Arizmendi did not give up hope. Instead, he sat down with the telephone book and began calling plastic surgeons in the area to see if someone would be willing to help this young man. After many attempts, he finally found someone willing to see the child, Dr. Steven Siciliano of the Hickory Plastic Surgery Center. Dr. Siciliano asked them to bring the child in for a consultation to see what could be done. After the consultation, Dr. Siciliano offered to perform the corrective surgery at no charge, leaving Social Services only the cost of the anesthesia and materials.

When asked why he made such a generous offer, Dr. Siciliano replied, “It was an easy decision to make. I like kids. I’m a softie.” He knew that this child was having trouble in school and wanted to help. “I know that kids can be cruel,” he said, and explained that this type of procedure is no longer covered by insurance. Dr. Siciliano humbly expressed his embarrassment at the attention he has been given, saying, “More of this goes on than people realize, a lot of physicians do this type of thing.”

By all accounts, the surgery was a huge success. Social workers report that this child’s self esteem has improved dramatically. He has been able to transition back into mainstream school since having the surgery, and is a much happier student. Social service presented Dr. Siciliano with a plaque in appreciation of his service to others. Through his simple act of generosity, Dr. Siciliano was able to give one child a brighter future.